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EUR/NCE FOR ERIC FICHTE, DRL/MLGA FOR JULIETE NOYES, IO/RHS
FOR DOUG ROHN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/18/2017

TAGS: PREL PHUM ZI EZ

SUBJECT: CZECH REPUBLIC SUPPORTS UNHRC ACTION ON ZIMBABWE
STARTING MARCH 26

REF: A. STATE 33357

¶B. LONDON 01050

Classified By: Political-Economic Counselor Mike Dodman
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary. According to Czech MFA Human Rights Department official Jan Kaminek, the Czech government strongly condemns the Mugabe government's violent, anti-democratic actions. Accordingly, the Czech government has supported the EU's statements on the issue and will support an UNHRC proclamation, resolution, and/or special session on Zimbabwe. However, MFA Director of the Middle East and Africa Department Josef Rychtar said the Czechs wish to keep a low profile on the issue because they are concerned the Czech Ambassador in Harare may soon be expelled for visiting injured democracy advocates in the hospital. Thus, the Czech government does not currently plan to publicly denounce the Zimbabwe government. End summary.

¶2. (C) Poloff spoke with Czech MFA Human Rights Department Head of the EU and UN Section Jan Kaminek on March 19-20 to discuss the recent events in Zimbabwe (Ref A). Kaminek said the Czech government is deeply concerned about the crisis, and plans to be a "hardliner" within the UNHRC. The Czech government supports the UK delegation proposal that the UNHRC should wait to address Zimbabwe until the third week of the session (the week of March 26), so that UNHRC members can address Sudan without distraction this week (Ref B). Regarding the UNHRC response, Kaminek said the Czech government would support a proclamation or single country resolution condemning the Zimbabwe government, or even a special session.

¶3. (C) Kaminek said the Czech government supported the March 19 and March 20 EU statements condemning the Mugabe government's actions and demanding the release of detainees in Zimbabwe. However, the Czech MFA does not currently plan to issue a national statement (although the MFA is still discussing the issue).

¶4. (C) MFA Director of the Middle East and Africa Josef Rychtar explained on March 20 that the MFA wishes to avoid confrontation with the Zimbabwe government because Czech Ambassador Vaclav Jilik (along with seven other Ambassadors) is in danger of being expelled from Zimbabwe for visiting injured democratic advocates in the hospital. Ambassador Jilik has been summoned by the Zimbabwe MFA to explain his actions (Rychtar did not know when the meeting will take place). Rychtar said the Czech government does not wish to endanger its mission in Harare. Therefore, the MFA has

instructed Ambassador Jilik not to criticize the Zimbabwe government during the meeting, but rather to listen.

¶5. (C) Comment. The Czech government cares deeply about human rights abuses wherever they occur, and can be relied upon to condemn such abuses as a member of multi-lateral institutions like the EU and the UN. However, the Czechs believe their sphere of influence is limited in Africa, and that their strategic interests and expertise lie elsewhere. Therefore, the Czechs generally avoid taking a high profile role when abuses take place in Africa, even when fundamental issues like human rights and democracy are at stake. End comment.

GRABER